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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the importance of responsible teaching, examining how professionally empowered teachers can move students in the direction of becoming empowered and independent learners. It explains that empowerment is integral within teacher education. Teachers must provide minimum conditions for success in terms of responsible teaching paradigms. Many variables determine how educators teach, and how these variables shape any interactions with students. It is important to eliminate barriers that could prevent teachers from empowering their students in the educational process. Moral dimensions of school reform dictate educators to adhere to conducive ethical standards and committed actions vital to the adequate performance of their teaching profession. Teacher education programs should implement empowerment in the school culture through proactive tangible procedures and action to ensure that responsible teaching is a prerequisite for responsible learning. Teachers must be intellectually appealing to students, effective in the learning-teaching contexts, and professionally ethical. They must believe in and act upon belief in students' great potential for learning and reflect the professional values of well-prepared and empowered teachers. Teacher educators need to avoid defensive teaching, which can benignly endanger students and teachers by jeopardizing ethical codes and moral obligations and suppressing students' voices. Quality teaching results in quality learning. Unless there are responsible teaching strategies in teacher education programs within an empowering framework, it will be difficult to actualize the ideals of the teaching profession. (Contains 12 references.) (SM)

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The Virtues of Responsible Teaching: Implications for Empowerment

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The Virtues of Responsible Teaching: Implications for Empowerment

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Introduction

Many teachers seek to create an intellectual crisis to set the stage for effective learning. This needed tension in education is seen necessary for both mastery learning and teaching. Indeed, it is the axiom upon which responsible teaching should be based.

However, there are many conditions that may tempt teachers to abandon the pillars of their professional duties. For example, many teachers have developed less responsible teaching styles to submit to the sociopolitical status quo in education. As such, they abstain from any practices that may create any resistance in the learning/teaching situations. What may be at risk here is the learning outcomes that are generally viewed as the result of teaching.

Since there is a big difference between "doing" and "keeping" a job in education, ideals and actions become vital ingredients for developing responsible teaching styles. Ideals come alive when students and teachers take collaborative action to engage themselves in intellectual discourse. While students are judged by their actions in academia in terms of learning outcomes, teachers must balance their actions with the ideals of their teaching. In other words, for responsible learning to happen, accountable teaching styles must shape teachers' philosophy and pedagogy.

Likewise, how one teaches is often measured by how those being taught learn. Only the professionally empowered educators have the ability to become empowering for their students. To move students in the direction of becoming empowered and independent learners, teachers must provide minimum conditions for success in terms of responsible

teaching paradigms. This paper will explore these issues and provide implications for a more responsible teaching in the 21st century schools.

Empowerment: A Bold Proposal for Responsible Teaching

Many democracies such as the Greek civilization have integrated emancipation of individuals in schools. For children, they believed, to perform his/her civic function they must acquire civic skills and ethical responsibilities. A major component of these was empowering the mind so that individuals had the freedom to attain their full intellectual potential. This cognitive and social democratic upbringing began in the early stages of the child's education. Schools had the responsibility to nurture the child's liberties and pursuit of happiness through empowerment and liberation from any cognitive or sociocultural limitations and pressures.

Like learning, undoubtedly, how one teaches is determined by an array of variables and conditions. For example, peer pressure, political pressure, educational leadership roles, rewards and punishment, and most importantly by the price tag of the teaching profession are all important determiners of learning/teaching outcomes. These variables and others tend to shape any form of interaction including educational treatments in schools. When teachers are bound by some sociopolitical pressure, it would be very difficult for them to perform their role meaningfully. Also various pressures would thwart teachers' efforts to inculcate the cherished civic values in their students. Based on the axiom that responsible learning is a reflection of responsible teaching, it is important to eliminate, through empowerment, any barriers that may prevent teachers from empowering their students in the educational process.

However, moral dimensions of school reform dictate on educators of all kind to adhere to conducive ethical standards and committed actions vital to the adequate performance of the their teaching profession (Goodlad, 1996; Sirotnik, 1990; Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990). These must be unmarked aspect of teacher education programs

in which both faculty and students enjoy an adequate sense empowerment. Thus, teacher education programs should implement empowerment in the school culture through procative tangible procedures and action to ensure that responsible teaching is a prerequisite for responsible learning.

Ethical Dimensions of Responsible Teaching

In the Greek philosophers' terms, there are three major requirements for responsible teaching. First, *the logos of teaching* require teachers to be intellectually appealing given their exemplar of knowledge about what they teach. This in turn requires students to *cope with* the exigent yet rewarding intellectual nuisance as they are challenged to learn and become competent. Second, *the pathos of teaching* require teachers to be affective in the learning teaching contexts. This means that the teacher must create needed intellectual and emotional tension in students. Unless this is balanced with its cognitive counterpart, students may find it damaging to their self-image and their potential in what they can do. Finally, *the ethos of teaching* is the culmination of the teacher's ethical and professional appeal to all learners: teachers who are professionally ethical entice students to learning, provide a good model for respect, honor and value diversity, believe in students' optimal potential for success and excellence, provide the necessary caring environment, prepare students for civic functioning, and strive to meet learners' cognitive, emotional, social, and academic needs. This includes all an assuming personality traits conducive to learning and teaching.

Based on this empowering framework for education, we must enjoin the virtues of responsible teaching at all costs. Following are some of the guidelines teachers need to follow for both responsible teaching and learning outcomes:

(1) provide multiple learning opportunities for all students

(2) create a challenging, less threatening learning environment

(3) promote independent, life-long learning in all students

(4) set high expectations and standards for all students

(5) do incomplete teaching by posing more questions and providing less answers

(6) bridge the gap between theory and practice and vice versa

(7) avoid spoon-feeding teaching techniques to encourage critical thinking

(8) engage students in controlled floundering in learning situations

(9) invoke students' metacognitive and critical thinking skills

(10) utilize a variety of resources and techniques in their pedagogy

(11) integrate diversity in all aspects of learning

(12) lead to teach and teach to lead for long-term social and civic roles

(13) teach to empower and become empowered to teach

(14) initiate research and take action for constant school renewal

(15) offer success in exchange for student maximum effort

(16) engage students in active learning through contextualization

These are some of the actions responsible teachers take in the classroom setting. They embody their responsibility to believe and act upon the premise of students' great potential for learning, thus providing high standards for success in terms of maximum effort of both teachers and students. They also reflect the professional values of well-prepared teachers who are not only empowered themselves, but the have the ability to empower their students.

The growing literature about empowerment in education indicates the necessity of freeing the minds of students and teachers (Fullan, 1994; Goodlad, 1996; Gupton, 1995; Midgley & Wood, 1993; Martin, 1991). Broadly defined, empowerment involves as gaining power to have the ability to act with results where groups may attempt to transform and change society and free themselves from the forces of oppression (Sleeter, 1991). Narrowly defined, empowerment must be an overarching framework for teacher education programs which is, of course, seen essential for individuals and ultimately for groups. To

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well-prepare teachers to empower their students, teacher education programs must have a conceptual framework for educating pre-service students.

In short, whatever conceptual framework there is, empowerment is an integral part of teacher education for many reasons. First, it seen as a value teachers inculcate on their students so that they play their larger role in society. This value is intricately related to several other civic values all members of society cherish such as liberty, equity, and the pursuit of happiness. Unless teachers possess a sense of emancipation in democratic schools, they may not be able to help students acquire this value and have voice in their lives. Second, empowerment is a way to free the mind of learners so that they reach their full potential. Research indicates that our minds are limited by what boundaries to choose to set on ourselves and abilities. Third, empowerment is vital to making choices about how meanings are negotiated by participants in schools. Finally, it is a necessary ingredient to foster self-respect in students and teachers alike.

The Vices of Defensive Teaching

While responsible teaching must be the basis for preparing teachers and students, teacher educators must be cautioned against the vices of defensive teaching. Defensive teaching can benignly endanger both students and teachers. On one hand, it jeopardizes the ethical codes and moral obligations of professional teachers who yield to internal and external pressures at schools when performing their job. On the other hand, it suppresses students' voices and limits their great potential for success and prosperity as they acquire a sense of powerlessness as a result of defensive teaching. Needless to say, defensive teaching can create an unbecoming imbalance between ideals and action in school settings.

Reflecting on the issues of idealism, empowerment and professional responsible teaching, Brunner (1995, p. 38) described what is meant by defensive teaching:

> My cooperating teacher had developed a "defensive teaching" style (McNeil, 1988). Teachers who teach defensively says McNeil, choose "methods of

> presentation and evaluation that they hope will make their work load more efficient and create as little student resistance as possible" (p. 174). She offered success to students in exchange for minimal effort, compliance, and "doing the work." For example, homework often done by the students during the class period when there were no worksheets to do . . . The quality of the work was not examined; the work was merely looked at to see if it had been done. If it had been completed, the student would receive the full number of points, which would be added for a grade.

Unlike responsible teachers who offer success in return to maximum effort, defensive teachers frequently do so not out of benevolence. Rather, they teach defensively out of fear that their authority may be threatened, thus compromising their intellectual and ethical standards on one hand, and jeopardizing the students' learning outcomes on the other.

Defensive teaching styles and strategies are easy to detect. They are reflected in the way defensive teachers choose to structure instruction and present educational treatments. In many instances, these choices are determined by the sociopolitical conditions under which defensive teaching takes place. In other words, the sociopolitical context of the teaching learning situation will determine the extent to which teachers and students can attain empowerment (Martin, 1991; Moore & Suleiman, 1997). Nonetheless, defensive teaching strategies can be seen as vices contrary to the virtues of responsible teaching.

In teacher preparation contexts, Gupton (1995) acknowledged the need for a paradigm shift to define responsible roles and combat defensive roles of teachers. Elsewhere such paradigm advocates responsible teaching over defensive teaching, proactive teaching over reactive teaching, active teaching over passive teaching, empowering teaching over empowered teaching, leadership teaching over managerial teaching, creative production of knowledge over passive consumption of knowledge, and socioculturally-relevant

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teaching over sociopolitically-correct teaching (Gupton , 1995; Moore & Suleiman, 1997; Sleeter, 1991; Shor & Freire, 1987).

In any event, based on the precluding climate for responsible teaching, we must reject the vices of defensive teaching. Following are some of the symptoms of defensive teaching strategies that thwart effective learning outcomes. Defensive teaching occurs when teachers:

(1) take the route of least resistance

(2) seek passive conformity to tradition

(3) avoid risk-taking and risk-making

(4) attempt to keep rather than do a job

(5) resist change and renewal

(6) consume rather than produce research

(7) offer success for minimal student effort

(8) use politically-correct rather than culturally-relevant pedagogy

(9) engage students in passive learning

(10) attempt to suppress students" voice

Obviously, there are many other forms and conditions that perpetuate defensive teaching schools at various levels. Unless teachers, administrators, and educators have a vision to redefine their roles and functions, students' learning outcomes will be negatively influenced. At the same time, all participants must combat defensive teaching strategies that may plague educational institutions and affect desired outcomes.

In conclusion, quality in teaching breeds quality in learning. Unless we implement responsible teaching strategies in teacher education programs within an empowering framework, we will continue to flounder about how to actualize the ideals of the teaching profession. The emancipatory relationship among teachers, students, and educators is of paramount significance for educational change and school reform.

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